



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 11/15/2005

GAIN Report Number: E35218

EU-25

Livestock and Products

EC launches new Public Consultation on Animal Welfare

2005

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Report Highlights:

On November 8, 2005, the European Commission has launched a new online public consultation on animal welfare until December 11, 2005. The survey consists of multiple-choice questions, which leave no room for personal comments. One of the major goals of the survey is expressed in the press release: "Participants in the survey are also asked what results they would expect to see if animal welfare standards were to become a greater consideration in food production. " It seems that questions 13 and 14 are the most relevant questions of the survey for U.S. exporters.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Brussels USEU [BE2]
[E3]

On November 8, 2005, the European Commission has launched a new online public consultation on animal welfare.

"The European Commission has launched an internet consultation on the welfare of farm animals, to assess the level of public awareness of animal welfare issues, and to gauge how important they are for EU citizens. Questions in the online survey cover the perceived level of animal welfare protection in the EU, including for individual species, and where improvements could be made. Participants in the survey are also asked what results they would expect to see if animal welfare standards were to become a greater consideration in food production. This online survey, which will run until 11 December 2005, is the second initiative in the framework of the Commission's consultation on animal welfare, following the gathering of comments from the Advisory Group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health in July. The Commission will adopt an Action Plan on Animal Welfare in early December, and the results of this public consultation will be published simultaneously."

The online consultation consists of a set of multiple-choice questions, which are very general and appear to be a bit leading, leaving no room for personal views or comments. The whole consultation appears to be designed to support further more stringent legislation for animal welfare requirements in food production, including on imported products. In this respect, it seems that questions 13 and 14 are the most relevant of the survey for U.S. exporters.

13. Do you believe that the EU should do more to promote a greater awareness of animal welfare/ protection internationally?

please pick one answer



Yes,
certainly



Yes,
probably



No, probably
not



No, certainly
not



I don't
know

14. Do you believe that imported foods should be produced under conditions of animal welfare/ protection at least as high as those applied in your country ?

please pick one answer



Yes,
certainly



Yes,
probably



No, probably
not



No, certainly
not



I don't
know

The press release on this public consultation can be found at
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/health_consumer/library/press/ipm_consultation08112005.pdf.

The online consultation can be accessed at
http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/consultations/action_plan_farmed_background_en.htm

Following the gathering of comments, the Commission will adopt an Action Plan on Animal Welfare in early December, and the results of this public consultation will be published simultaneously.

Animal Welfare – another area of food policy to serve consumer emotional wellness expectations?

In the past decades, European food legislation has gradually been implementing requirements to meet consumer expectations beyond the aspects of nutritional value and food safety. Organic food standards and many food quality labels are examples that originated from private sector initiatives. However, issues like biotech food or meat production using hormones have been regulated or prohibited through legislation. Because these requirements couldn't be traced in the final food product, the only way to identify and communicate these properties to the consumer has been through certification and labeling.

Animal Welfare has become the latest area for new legislation in European food production. The EC [Animal Health and Welfare](#)¹ website leaves little doubt about the EC's commitment in this:

"The Treaty of Amsterdam, in force since 1st May 1999, lays out new ground rules for the actions of the European Union (EU) on animal welfare in a special " [Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals](#)". It recognizes that animals are sentient beings and obliges the European Institutions to pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals when formulating and implementing Community legislation.

.....

The new [Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe](#) signed on 29 October 2004 by the Heads of State or Government of the 25 Member States and the 3 candidate countries also retains the commitment to ensuring the protection of animals."

Because of the intangible nature of animal welfare on the final food product, it must be feared that certification and labeling requirements will be implemented as a communication tool towards the consumer, unless total production is required to comply with these standards. It is as yet not clear what requirements will apply to imported products, but it must be feared that additional labeling will be the minimal requirement, if not full implementation of EC animal welfare standards.

In its Veterinary Equivalency Agreement (VEA) with Chile, signed in 2002, the EC has already included animal welfare requirements. This agreement directly states as one of its objectives, *"reaching a common understanding between the Parties concerning animal welfare standards"*. For more info on this VEA with Chile, see GAIN report E35219.

¹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/animal/welfare/policy/index_en.htm

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